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INCREASING THE QUALITY OF SERVICE

Case Service Desk

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TIIVISTELMÄ

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Tämän opinnäytetyön aiheena on tutkia miten palvelunlaatu muodostuu ja kuinka hyödyntää tätä lopputulosta käyttötuen palvelunlaadun parantamiseksi. Tarkoitus on tuoda lisäarvoa asiakkaille ja palveluntarjoajalle orientoimalla käyttötuen henkilökuntaa paremman laadun saavuttamiseksi.

Antamalla käyttötuen henkilökunnalle paremman ymmärryksen yhtiön prosesseista, asiakkuudenhallinnasta ja palvelunlaadusta, työntekijät saivat paremman käsityksen omasta tärkeydestään palvelunlaadun ja asiakassuhteiden parantamisessa. Tällä hetkellä työntekijät eivät välttämättä ymmärrä kuinka suuri vaikutus heidän tekemisillään on asiakkaisiin.

Opinnäytetyö esittää teoriaa ja tietoa, jotka ovat keskeisiä parhaan mahdollisen käyttötuki palvelun toimittamisesta asiakkaalle

Lähteinä on käytetty tekijän omaa kokemusta alalta, haastattelua, kirjoja sekä akateemisia artikkeleita

ABSTRACT

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The topic of this thesis was to study how service quality is formed and to use this outcome to improve the quality of an IT service desk. The goal was to bring value to the customers and to the company by orienting the service desk personnel towards better service quality.

By giving the service desk personnel a better understanding of the business process, customer relationship management and service quality the employees would gain more insight in to their own importance when it comes to improving service quality and the relationship with the customer. Currently personnel might not be aware of the impact that their actions have on the customer.

This thesis presents theory and knowledge which are crucial when it comes to delivering the best possible service to the customers in the form of service desk support.

Sources used in this study are the author's own experience in the industry, an interview, books and peer reviewed articles.

Keywords Service quality, service desk, customer relationship management

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TIIVISTELMÄ

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1 INTRODUCTION

Small, medium and large enterprises all need the help of Information technology (IT) service department to keep the business running effectively. Most businesses outsource these services to companies which solely provide IT Service Desk solutions. Service desk is the primary contact point for the customers. Ideally one seeks guaranteed levels of service for service desk services, technical support or customer service offerings.

By allowing a third party to manage the service desk as an outsourced service, it will give the customer company the freedom to focus on their core competencies while providing their employees and customers with professional and effective service desk solutions.

The industry is highly competitive and for customer the decision to select a third party to operate as their service desk provider can come down to the smallest of details. Price is always the main factor for customers but the service provider can only decrease it to a certain level until business is no longer profitable. There is always likely to be another service provider in a cheaper country willing to offer their services for a fraction of the price you are offering. This only leaves service quality as a competitive advantage.

Service desk employees, both current and new, might have the required knowledge to perform their tasks at an adequate level. However, by providing additional education on the workings of the company and what should be considered when serving customers an increase in service quality can be attained.

There is a large number of IT service desk providing companies ranging from several personnel operated startup companies to huge multinational entities. Especially the ones newer to the industry might be lacking in ideas to improve their service level, or they simply do not know where to start. The goal of this thesis is to compile crucial information regarding the formation and improvement of service quality, which the

companies could distribute among the service desk personnel to attain better service quality and, thus a better relationship with the customers.

1.1 Background of the thesis

My interest in the subject is based upon my own work experience at a service desk. Books, discussions with colleagues and an interview with members of service desk staff have been used to compile data that should prove useful when attempting to establish better quality of service at a service desk. The thesis gives guideline on how service desk quality can be improved. The focus is on providing knowledge to beginners in the IT service industry and to provide supplementary knowledge on the improvement of service quality to those who wish to enhance their professional skills

1.2 Structure of the thesis

The thesis has been divided into chapters which examine different aspects of service quality, due to the nature of the empirical data collected via an interview. Integration between theoretical- and empirical part had to be done to prevent duplicate insertion. For this reason the clearly empirical section at the end is left relatively short.

1.3 Limitations of the study

IT services is a broad concept which includes everything IT related that is needed to uphold a company's ability to operate. The study has been limited to the service desk level. Other company functions affect service quality. However, service desk is not able to directly influence other departments, so therefore their part in the overall quality should be examined separately.

2 B2B IT SERVICES

Marketing and selling services for business customers is classified as business to business marketing and selling. It is shortened into B2B acronym. Marketing and sales to individuals is known as business to customer (B2C) interaction. When dealing with individuals the sales process is usually affected by emotion while in B2B interaction the defining factor is logic. (Hutt, 2010) Despite this organizations are still run by individuals so understanding the organizational buyers and how they operate within the confines of their organization's procedures is crucial when establishing a B2B relationship. Organizational buyers want to see statistics on how the offered service saves them time, money and resources when compared to the competition.

B2B IT service is part of the service industry. Its function is to provide the customer with solutions for all of their IT problems. Service desk is a large part of the service, they handle issues that the customers face when running business operations (this part of the service is further discussed in chapter 3). Depending of what has been agreed on the service level agreement (Chapter 5) the service provider might also be in charge of equipment, hardware, software, security, and servers.

Generally B2B handles orders in larger quantity than in the B2C sector. (Hutt, 2010) The decision to outsource IT services to a third party or to change the provider of IT services influences the company heavily. For this reason the decision making process takes a long time and the business proposition is carefully considered from all angles before its finalization.

Having a proper quality standard that can be conveyed to the customer has become a mandatory factor when attempting to sell services and form a B2B relationship.

2.1 Information Technology Infrastructure Library

ITIL was created as a response to the growing dependency on IT in the 1980s. It is the most widely accepted approach to IT service management in the world. The first

international standard for IT service management ISO/IEC 20000 is largely based on ITIL. Most B2B IT service providers follow these guidelines and the largest providers such as IBM, Fujitsu and HP have all adopted ITIL early as standard guideline. (IBM, 2014) (HP, 2014) (Fujitsu, 2014)

ITIL is not an inflexible theory- or guide book which lays down the absolute rules for the industry. Rather it is a collection of the best practices for planning and delivering of IT services that have been tested in numerous organizations around the world.

ITIL describes processes, procedures, tasks, and checklists which are not organization-specific, but can be applied by an organization for establishing integration with the organization's strategy, delivering value, and maintaining a minimum level of competency. It allows the organization to establish a baseline from which it can plan, implement, and measure. It is used to demonstrate compliance and to measure improvement, because ITIL can be applied to all organization sizes, it is mandatory to understand that only the parts which fit well with a specific company should be extracted from ITIL and applied to the organization. (Axelos, 2014)

Over the years ITIL has undergone many changes. Originally it consisted of 30 volumes. Today ITIL version 3 has been narrowed down to five core publications:

Service Strategy covers designing and implementation of service strategy, value generation and linking of IT services to the needs of the business.

Service Design covers the goals and elements of service design, selection of service model, expense models, risk/profit analysis, implementation of service plan, measuring and controlling of service

Service Transition covers the management of change in organization and organization culture, Knowledge Management, Service Knowledge Management System, procedures, policies and tools.

Service Operation covers management of applications, management of change, management of production, control processes, functions.

Continual Service Improvement covers methods from quality management in order to learn from past successes and failures. The aim is to continually improve the effectiveness and efficiency of IT processes and services

The books describe the entire lifecycle of IT services, from the creation of the service strategy to the planning, initialization, production and continuous development of the service.

This thesis deals with all of the volumes to some extent with the main emphasis on “Continual Service Improvement” which details the actions needed for continuous improvement of service quality and “Service Operations” which covers the service desk operations. (Axelos, 2014)

3 SERVICE DESK

Service desk as a whole can be defined in various ways but according to ITIL “Service desk is intended to provide a single point of contact to meet the communication needs of both IT users and IT employees. But also to satisfy both Customer and IT Provider objectives” (Axelos, 2014)

A call center, contact center and helpdesk all fall under the service desk category even though they are considered to be limited kinds of service desks that only offer a portion of what a service desk can offer.

Service desk has a more broad and user-centered approach, providing the user with a single point of contact for all IT requirements. In addition to actively monitoring and owning “incidents” and “user questions”, a service desk seeks to facilitate the integration of business processes into the service management infrastructure. A service desk also provides an interface for other activities such as customer change requests, third parties, and software licensing. (Mackey, 2014)

Service desk is the first contact point for end users and they are responsible for receiving, analyzing, solving and lastly delegating the customer’s service requests. The primary function of a service desk is to meet the need of the end user and get them operational as quick as possible in an instance of a technical failure. They provide first level technical support to customers, should the problem require more extensive IT knowledge it is the service desk’s duty to create a ticket and transfer the service request onward. If the ticket cannot be solved during the first encounter, the service desk employee will inform the customer what will be done regarding the ticket and when it can be expected to be solved. The progression of the service request can be followed in the work queue and all the personnel who manage the ticket will insert their work time into the system. Together they form the overall time it took to complete the ticket (Forsman, 1996). For a service desk the word customer does not just mean the company which has purchased the service. It includes every

single end user from the company who might be in contact with their technical problems. In addition to the end users the service desk often has to work together with the customer company's IT department. How the cooperation is organized varies between organizations, but in general the IT department determines the policies that the service desk has to follow when dealing with end user, such as admission of credentials and admin rights.

These problems include but are not limited to: usage of workstation, hardware problem, software problem, internet connection, malfunctioning accessory equipment and outdated credentials. End users are able to contact service desk via telephone, email, self-service portal or in some cases chat portal.

It is of vital importance that the service desk personnel are able to answer the end user service request within a set time limit that has been determined in the service level agreement.

Services to the end user include:

- Single contact point for all service requests
- End users are able to follow the progress of the service requests
- All service requests are registered into the system during the customer encounter
- A certain number of the service requests are completed during the first customer encounter
- The service request remains active in the system until a solution has been found, only then can the ticket be closed.
- Data concerning customer relationship is stored to create better experience (Kalliokoski & Salmu, 2014)

3.1 Structure of Service Desk

Service desk is divided into teams that only handle specific customer contacts. The personnel have also been oriented to handle a specific customer's needs (chapter 8). They also have a set number of customers whose service requests they handle daily. Handling some customer contacts requires extensive and specific knowledge of the customer company. For this reason adequate number of service desk personnel who have been trained to handle specific customers should always be available. When the planned number of service desk personnel fail and the phone lines from certain customers become flooded, other teams have to work as a backup and support the team which does not have the resources to handle the incoming requests. This allows the service requests to be received and filed into the system. However, service quality might suffer due to personnel handling customers that they have received no training for. (Ditmore, 2014)

3.2 Service requests distribution

The service desk agent tracks incoming calls and emails and files all the information into the system, either directly into the service request system or into a separate one designed specifically for storing call data. The agent solves tier 1 requests that should be possible to complete with the knowledge acquired from orientation period. If the request requires extensive technical knowledge then it is considered to be of higher tier and should be assigned forward to a department which has the expertise for completing the task.

The forwarding is done by creating a ticket out of the request and assigning it to a department or a specific person. The employees who these tickets are forwarded to are usually classified as specialists, analysts or engineers. Specialists handle similar issues to service desk agents, but with higher technical skill. Usually a service desk employee attempts to solve the end users request but upon failure assigns it to a specialist. Analysts and engineers mostly handle issues related to servers and networks. Analysts administrate access to servers and oversee their performance.

Engineers maintain the servers operational and are able to perform changes to them. Depending on the IT service provider, the distribution of these tasks might vary greatly. If the service provider has agreed with the customer to also provide local support, then the service desk employee can transfer the ticket to them as well. However, in cases where the presence of a local IT technician is needed the protocol varies between companies. Large service providers might have their own local support which they can call upon in which case the ticket transfer can be done internally using normal means, but most companies do not have this privilege, especially those providing service to international customers. Local support is handled via a third party with whom the service provider has made a contract with. The service request transfer is usually made by template sent through email. Depending on the third party the reliability and speed of service cannot always be guaranteed. The unknown variables are distance from the third party's location of operations to the customer, third party service quality and response time. (Kalliokoski & Salmu, 2014)

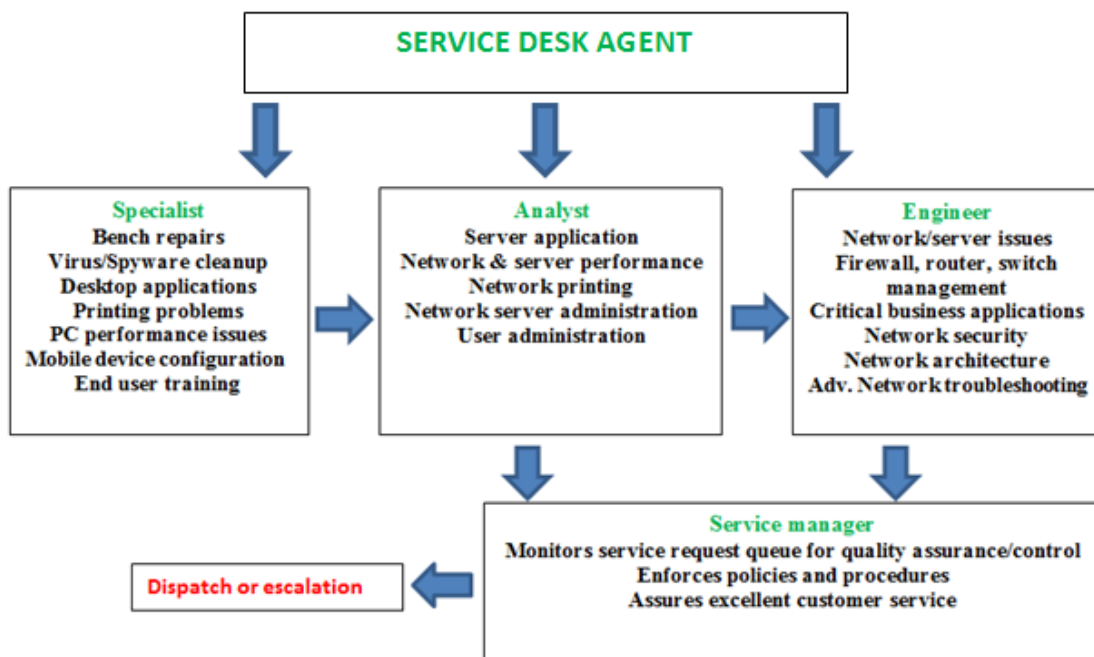


Figure 1 Service request distribution

(Helpdesk, 2014)

The figure 1 shows the general movement of service requests from the service desk, internally in the company. The service desk agent is able to directly assign the ticket to any department. The person receiving the ticket can determine that solving the ticket does not fall under their responsibility. At this point the ticket is either sent back to the agent who assigned it, or to a different department or a service manager. The service manager is responsible for monitoring the service requests and has the ability to dispatch or escalate tickets. Correctly assigning tickets is of great importance when it comes to decreasing the ticket queue. Service desk agents should also monitor transferred tickets when possible to ensure that they get processed.

4 SERVICE QUALITY

Today service quality has become a determining factor for successful businesses. In the IT service industry there is a high level of competition between companies. Good service quality attracts more customers bad quality, on the other hand, causes unnecessary expenses for the companies. The expenses are formed out of handling reclamations, reopening closed tickets and correcting old mistakes. Having to reopen a closed ticket effectively makes the time previously used on the service request meaningless. In addition, the person reopening the ticket has to go through the previous data accumulated about the service request and possibly contact the person who closed it, asking for further information. Solving this type of tickets take a lot more time than it would take to solve it when the service desk first received the ticket. Sometimes reopening a ticket is unavoidable, because the problem turns out to be a lot more complex than it first appeared. For instance, the first time around when the service desk agent closed the ticket he thought that it was solved. However, the problem persists and reoccurs. This is of no fault to the service desk agent. What should be avoided is having to reopen tickets due to carelessness of the service desk agent. The tickets should only be closed when the employee handling them is certain that the problem is solved.

Waste of time and resources is one expense to be considered, but these instances of unsolved IT problems also tarnish the customer relationship. End users are not amused when their time is being wasted. From their point of view the service request appears simple and should be solved within a moment. They usually do not understand, nor do they care, about the mechanics involved in solving a problem they have. Delays and badly handled service requests accumulate negative feelings among the end users and they will eventually reach the customer and possibly generate discussion about changing IT service providers.

By focusing on the cost of bad service the need for quality leadership can be seen clearly. The expenses of bad service quality are rarely measured. Quality,

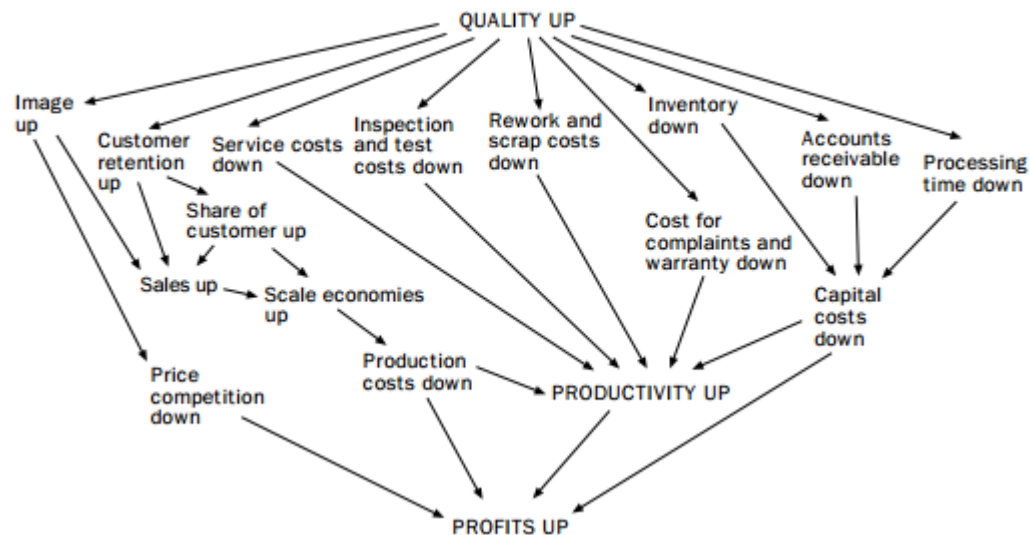
productivity and profitability known as the “triplets” are considered inseparable due to the fact that they all serve the purpose of making operations efficient, both to the supplier and the customer. Neglecting one area has negative effect on others as shown in figure 2. (Gummesson, 2007)

Table 1 Profile of the triplets

Productivity	The ratio between output and input; most commonly used for reduction of cost and capital employed; tradition from engineering and manufacturing (Fordism, Taylorism, work study)
Quality	Previous emphasis on technical aspects, quality as perceived by design and manufacturing specialists; today emphasis on quality as perceived by the “user specialists”, the customers, and expressed as customer satisfaction, value to the customer, and revenue; service quality has developed from services marketing into a unique discipline
Profitability	Traditionally the combined effect of revenue, cost and capital employed; increasingly a relationship marketing and customer retention approach; a broadening of indicators from merely financial indicators to the balanced scorecard and intellectual capital

(Gummesson, 2007)

The triplets at play



(Gummesson, 2007)

Figure 2 Interconnection between quality, productivity and profitability

4.1 Customer satisfaction

When a service request is closed an email is sent to customer informing them that the ticket has been solved together with an explanation about the actions taken by the service desk. Attached to the email is a link to which the customer can give feedback. Customers rarely take time to answer to feedback so this does not work as an efficient tool for improving service quality. Feedback is usually given by the management of the customer company directly to the management of the IT service provider. In practice this generates a reprimand from the management to the service desk that urges them to do better in the future without including actual constructive feedback.

4.2 Customer complaints

The problem with feedback is that even when customers do not give it to the service provider, it does not mean that customers are content with the service. For every complaint received there are another nine unhappy customers who don't complain. On average each unhappy customer will tell another ten people of their experience and they in turn will tell a further five people what they have heard. The result of this is that badly handled customer encounters are not left between the single end user and the service provider. Most likely the people who the unhappy end user shares their experience with are members of the same company. In the end the entire department where the end user resides will hear of the encounter and negative opinions start to form. This phenomenon is called the iceberg effect and is shown in figure 3. (tememo, 2014)



Figure 3 the Iceberg effect

4.3 Quality management

Sometimes services marketing is made synonymous with service quality management. In the late 1970s service quality came under a lot of criticism from unhappy customers and citizens. Researchers found very little previous material in literature on the subject. Systematic approaches to quality management in goods manufacturing had started to develop already in the 1920s.

Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry created a quality management framework called SERVQUAL to measure quality in the service sector. Originally SERVQUAL consisted of 10 components: reliability, responsiveness, competence, access, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, understanding and tangibles. Later these components were compressed into a simpler, five dimensional form called RATER:

Reliability: The ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.

Assurance: The knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence.

Tangibles: The appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials.

Empathy: The provision of caring, individualized attention to customers.

Responsiveness: The willingness to help customers and to provide prompt service.

The models are used to qualitatively explore and assess customers' service experiences. The goal is for the organization to find a way to bridge the gap between perceived and expected service. The gaps that an organization should strive to minimize are:

The management perception gap: the difference between expected service by customers and the management's perceptions of the consumer's expectations

The quality specification gap: the difference between management perception and the actual specification of the customer experience

The service delivery gap: the difference between customer driven service design and standards and service delivery.

The market communication gap: the difference between the delivery of the customer experience and what is communicated to customers.

The perceived service quality gap: the difference between a customer's perception of the experience and the customer's expectation of the service.
(Parasuraman;Berry;& A, 1991)

4.4 Standardized service

Customers want customized and streamlined service. It should only include specific products and services that the customer has paid for. Tailor made solutions give the customer best return on their investment because they are not paying for anything unnecessary. Customization is a great resource when marketing IT solutions to customers. A flexible product and service is a key point when attracting customers away from competition. However, customization also creates problems for the service desk. Customers have their own tailor made programs and procedures which they use

in their business operations. Regulations and the way issues are handled vary greatly between companies.

4.5 Common service requests:

The following section shows five of the more common service requests that are issued daily to the service desk at the case company: (1) forgotten passwords, (2) malfunctioning printer, (3) software updates, (4) operating system and (5) e-mail problem.

- (1) Sometimes people simply forget their passwords, come back to work from a leave of absence to an expired password, or thought they knew their password, but were unable to login after three unsuccessful tries. Service desks that take phone requests have the burden of determining whether the person asking for a reset is who they say they are to prevent unauthorized access to the system. Password resets via self-service portal can save time and help prevent social engineering breaches. In some cases the company policy might prevent the use of self-service due to security risk.
- (2) Some organizations require the Service desk to be in charge of printer supplies to help keep costs under control. Also, a simple printer can cause a myriad of problems. They can stop working, for apparently no reason at all. For example, if a printer has been equipped with auto installation feature which refuses to cooperate, a simple printer installation can turn into a several hour long process. When new employees need access to a network printer, they must often be granted that access via Service desk, which will install drivers and grant access.
- (3) In some organizations, end users do not have administrative rights to change settings or do updates. Sometimes, end users need to update Java for graphics systems to work properly, and Adobe Reader releases updates all the time. The move to cloud-hosted software helps cut down on these calls, because

updates are installed automatically. A specific program that the customer is using might not be functional with the newest Java or browser updates. For this reason auto updates have been restricted in some companies. Even though the restrictions cause increased work load in the form of simple updates. They are still necessary in most cases. If all the end users had administrative rights to their workstations, they would be free to manage the installed software by themselves. Then the service desk would become encumbered with service requests relating to third party software installed on the workstations and accidentally uninstalled software needed for work related tasks.

- (4) There has been an influx of end users migrating to the windows 8 operating system from the previous models. The newest version differs greatly from the previous ones and many users are requesting help in performing certain functions. Also, in the beginning of the year 2014 Microsoft stopped providing support for the XP operating system which forced companies to upgrade to newer versions. Customers might also use Macintosh or Linux based operating system on their workstations. This requires completely different knowledge from the service desk. There are usually separate departments or personnel specializing in these systems.
- (5) E-mail problems and issues relating to Microsoft Outlook such as; additional mailboxes, synchronization issues, conference calls, archives, disappeared emails, problems regarding Office Communicator and issues caused by migration of email services under cloud are all daily occurrences.

Depending on the company the solutions to these five different service requests might vary greatly. A single employee at a service desk could have as many as a few dozen customer companies with their different departments. The number of customers together with alternating solutions to service requests which at their core should be exactly the same results in possibly hundred different courses of action that the service desk personnel should be able to fulfill. Usually in the beginning of the

relationship, a customer has a highly distinguished way of doing things. Further into the customer relationship the IT solutions provider should urge the customers to assume similar ways of operating, decreasing the burden on the service desk by enabling them to apply the same solution to similar service requests even though the customer changes.

4.6 Detriments to service quality

The Silo Mentality is a mindset present when certain departments or sectors do not wish to share information with others in the same company or employees are focusing too specifically on their own tasks without paying any attention to the way that the company and the people in it operate. This type of mentality will reduce efficiency in the overall operations, reduce morale, and may contribute to the demise of a productive company culture.

Understanding internal workings of a company makes delegating service requests easier for the service desk personnel. When you understand what specific tasks other departments handle the number of wrongly assigned requests decrease. Incorrectly assigned tickets get delayed in various queues and they might get bounced around between departments before being sent back to the service desk.

Employees losing sight of the big picture, which is to work together to provide customers with fast and professional service is detrimental to the company as a whole. Personal results while being important are secondary to the overall result of the company. For this reason the silo mentality should be done away with and the focus set upon the big picture.

4.7 Cooperation between departments

Internal cooperation between departments is mandatory for successfully providing first class service to customers, assuming that the departments work on the same service. The speed at which information moves between departments determines in

many cases the time it takes to solve a service request. The service desk might need permission from another department to perform a certain function or the service desk personnel are unable to perform the task due to lack of tools. The tools and knowhow reside within a different department which has to perform the action in order for the ticket to be closed.

Due to a large number of tasks a simple service request might take a while to complete. For requests needing immediate attention the importance of communication becomes obvious. Effective communication between departments allows for escalation of service requests without resorting to formal route of delegating the escalation process to supervisors. A supervisor requesting certain task to be completed post-haste will put pressure on the other department and certainly get the job done. However, needlessly increasing the number of workers handling a single service request should be discouraged due to its inefficiency. By the time a supervisor has forwarded the request it could have already been solved had the departments cooperated from the start.

Despite the constant need for cooperation, escalation should be used with caution and reserved for service requests that truly need it. Otherwise the entire process for speeding up the service requests becomes meaningless when all the requests in the queue are escalated to top priority.

5 SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

A service level agreement (SLA) is a part of service contract where a service is formally defined. It is a contract between the customer and the service provider which determines the level of service offered to the customer. The main goal is to ensure and uphold the quality of the provided services. When the service quality that the customer expects has been thoroughly determined in a contract, it is easier for the service provider to procure the needed resources to upkeep the level of service. It also gives the customer clarity and realistic expectations concerning the level of service. SLA can also be used internally in a company between different departments (Peltoniemi, 2014)

Particular aspects such as the offered service, scope, priorities, quality, guarantees and responsibilities are agreed upon between the service provider and the customer. SLA also determines the sanctions for failure to meet the agreed upon level of service and the meters used to track and oversee the level of service. Requirements placed upon the service by SLA are rather abstract and cannot in their original form be used as meters for tracking service level. Service level objectives (SLO) are meters based on SLA requirements that can be effectively used to track service level. The meters include, for example, availability, response time and closed service requests. Comparing SLOs to the actual service level ensures that requirements of SLA are met.

In practice the SLO that the service desk has to pay the most attention to is based on a common feature of SLA which is a contracted delivery time of service. For service desk this means answering the end user service request within a set time limit. When the end user calls the service desk, the call has to be answered within a given time frame which, depending of the SLA, can be as short as 15-30 seconds. If the call is not answered within the time limit, it is marked as a negative in the record. The SLA can determine that 90 percent of the calls have to be answered within the given time frame or otherwise sanctions are formed.

6 PERSONNEL ORIENTATION

The aim of orientation is to familiarize new employees and personnel who receive new work tasks with their new job position. It traditionally includes familiarization with work place, its work policy, goals, customers and tools needed in the task.

The process can be divided into four sections. Step one includes actions to be taken before the employment begins such as the procurement of passwords for use in the work related tools. Step two is the acceptance of the new employee in the beginning of the employment. Step three is the familiarization with new work place and colleagues. Step four is the process of orienting the employee to the practical work tasks and work related tools.

If the employee is already part of the company and is just receiving a new work assignment, the first three steps are to be skipped in favor of the last one.

During the orientation the employee is told on basic level about the company's business activities, objectives and values. In the orientation to the actual work tasks the focus is on learning the work tools, work policy, customers and community.

The employer needs orientation to train and prepare employees to perform assigned tasks to maximum efficiency and to get the personnel to commit to the company and its policy. Committed employees understand and accept the objectives of the work tasks and are able to take action to reach them. Also, they are committed to the work community and are prepared to work towards a common goal.

Orienting brings benefits to the employee, employer and customers. The skill and quality requirements set on the task are easier to meet and the uncertainty of the employees decreases when they are comprehensively prepared to take on the new tasks. The employees are able to act independently and have the ability to adapt and apply their learned work methods to meet the needs of the constantly changing working environment. Professional and competent employees project a positive

image of the company to the customers. They are more interested in self-improvement and are faster to assume new information and directives. This ensures that they will be able to work efficiently in the future as well.

Without orienting, it would take much longer for employees to learn to perform their tasks and even longer to become competent in them. Expenses related to errors would dramatically increase, due to time wasted in correcting them and accumulating errors in long-term result in deteriorating customer relationships.

6.1 Social skills

The employees should also receive training in their social skills as customer encounters would leave a better impression to the customer and encounters with difficult customers would become easier to handle. Without having the social ability to be able to provide support and service to customers who might be aggravated for an unknown reason, things might escalate quickly and the customer encounter can turn ugly. The service desk employees should be able to work professionally despite a customer's negative attitude on the phone. The worst thing that can happen is that the employee gets angry at the customer and exchanges insults.

6.2 Planning personnel orientation

The orientation process has to be planned carefully. New employees need different emphasis on their training depending on their background. Collaboration between the supervisor and the person handling the orienting is crucial during the process. Together they can evaluate and determine the progress of orientation and which specific area the most needs focus so that the objective of the orientation is reached. Should the orientation be carried out using the same mold for each individual, it might result in the employees having weak areas in the various areas of their knowledge and they may not be able to perform the tasks required of them well. Filling gaps in knowledge afterwards is not easy, because there is no specific time

reserved for training later. In worst case this could result into termination of the employee's contract during the trial period through no fault of his/her own.

Employee transfers within the organization to new work assignment also requires orientation. Differences between departments can be extensive, especially in larger companies.

7 CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

Relationships are at the core of human behavior. If the social networks of relationships are abolished, society is dissolved and all that is left behind are a bunch of hermits living in isolation. In the long-term this would mean the extinction of human race. Marketing and business are subsets or properties of society. In practice, relationships, networks and interaction have been at the core of business since time immemorial. For a company, forming relationships with customers is just as important as it is for individuals to form relationships with other people. If companies are neglectful of this area, the long term result is the collapse of their businesses. (Gummesson, 2002, ss. 9-10)

In the past companies wanted to achieve better understanding of their marketing and relationship to customers. Due to this need the concept of customer relationship management (CRM) was born. There is no single, final definition of CRM. Authors have different take on what the concept means to them. (Gummesson, 2002, s. 11)

In his book “Accelerating Customer Relationships” Swift. R defines customer relationship management as, “it is an enterprise approach to understanding and influencing customer behavior through meaningful communications in order to improve customer acquisition, customer retention, customer loyalty and customer profitability”. (Swift, 2000)

Overall CRM is a model for doing business and a set of operating practices to maximize profitable revenue from customers. CRM includes a management strategy that enables a more customer-focused operation model and information system related to CRM. It also gives firms the necessary tools to create better relationships with their customers and effectively pool customer information together.

7.1 Benefits of CRM to the customer

The benefits of the CRM approach from customer's perspective are considerable. A better relationship with suppliers minimizes the risks during the purchasing process, faster service, customized and streamlined service and a mutual goal.

7.2 Customers' value-generating processes

Customers do not buy goods or services, they buy the benefits goods and services provide them with. The offerings that customers purchase consist of components such as goods, services, information and personal attention. These offerings render services to customers, and it is this customer-perceived service of an offering that creates value for them.

A firm's goal is to provide services which function as solutions to serve the customers value-generating processes. Whatever a customer buys should function as a service for them. This service requirement might be, in some cases, offset by variables like low price, imaginary factors surrounding the physical product or service or technologically advanced core solution. When firms choose a strategic perspective they should take into consideration their customers' value-generating processes and acknowledge their wants and needs. (Grönroos, Service Management and Marketing- A Customer Relationship Management Approach, 2000, ss. 3-4)

7.3 Strategic Perspectives

Strategic perspectives that define the way companies conduct business can be divided into four sections: service-, core product-, price and image perspective.

In a core products perspective the quality of the core solution is the main source of competitive advantage. A firm that has a sustainable technological advantage can benefit from applying such a perspective. The core product distinguishes itself from the competition and customers are persuaded to buy the service even when there are cheaper solutions available. If the conditions are not met then this perspective can be

disastrous for the company. (Grönroos, Service Management and Marketing- A Customer Relationship Management Approach, 2000, s. 5)

In a price perspective the firm considers low pricing to be the best source of competitive advantage. An acceptable profit margin can be achieved if the firm is able to maintain a sustainable cost advantage. However, losing the cost advantage causes the prices to plummet due to competition, which will result in the firm being unable to continue operating in the market. (Grönroos, 2000, s. 5)

In an image perspective the firm uses marketing communications to create imaginary values in addition to the value of the core product. Customers see the imaginary extras as the primary reason for the purchase of service. These images need constant reinforcement by marketing communications otherwise the effect will deteriorate. (Grönroos, 2000)

In a service perspective the firm has determined that an enhanced offering is required to support the customer's value-generating processes, and that the core solution by itself is not sufficient to create competitive advantage. Physical product components, service components, information, personal attention and other customer relationship elements are combined into a total service offering. Hidden services, both billable and non-billable are also included into total service offering and are considered to be supportive to the customer's value-creating processes. This detail is especially important when IT solutions are in question, because of the SLA structure. (Grönroos, 2000, ss. 4-6)

A firm can choose any of the perspectives. Following this choice it will form a strategic approach that differs from the one that would have been formed had the firm chosen a different perspective. Choosing a perspective does not mean that the other perspectives and their aspects are not important. The choice of perspective determines how the firm will develop resources and competencies. A company that has taken the service perspective approach should not neglect the other areas. However, the elements for other perspectives will always be geared towards the requirements of the

dominant perspective. Fine tuning of strategic approach varies between companies. (Grönroos, 2000, s. 6)

7.4 Market relationships

Relationship marketing (RM) is part of CRM and can be defined as marketing activities that are aimed at developing and managing trusting and long-term relationships with customers.

The philosophy of RM has been converted into tangible relationships which can be implemented into the company's marketing and business planning. The thirty relationships of RM have been defined and explained in the 30Rs. Below is a compilation of the 30Rs which affect the operation of IT service provider and its customer. The Rs are not in a ranking order. Their significance varies between companies and markets.

7.4.1 Classic market relationships

- **R1** - The relationship between a supplier and a customer

Rule of supply and demand, the foundation of marketing and business operations.

- **R2** - Customer-supplier-competitor triangle

Customer will always be looking out for an alternative and superior supplier options. The supplier has to provide services at a level which prevents the customer from choosing the said alternative.

- **R3** - Distribution channels, goods and services (consists of network of relationships)

How the service is delivered to the customer and the networks involved in the process.

7.4.2 Special market relationships

- **R4** - Full- and part-time marketers (FTM/PTM). The FTMs are professional relationship makers. All the others who perform other main functions but yet influence customer relationships are PTMs

Service desk personnel are PTMs. Unlike FTMs they are not paid to market and advertise the company. Their main function is to deliver the technical support service that the customer has paid for. However, they are also the direct and most commonly used influential link to the customer. Customers become external PTMs through interaction with the supplier. Their perception of the service quality will travel through word of mouth when they express their opinion of the service received.

- **R5** - The service encounter

The encounter is interaction between the customers and the supplier. Through the service desk, possibly thousands of customer encounters happen daily depending of the size of the supplier and the customer. The quality of the service will determine whether the encounters have a negative or a positive impact on the relationship.

- **R9** - The relationship to the dissatisfied customer

The way of handling a complaint can determine the quality of the future relationship. Due to the large number of customer encounters the potential number of dissatisfied customers' increases.

7.4.3 Nano relationships

- **R24** - Marker mechanisms are brought inside the company (profit centers)

Creates a market inside the company, changes internal relationships between different departments.

- **R25** - Internal customer relationship.

Dependency between departments, customers and suppliers within an organization

- **R27** - Internal marketing: relationships with the 'employee market'.

Internal marketing gives indirect and necessary support to the relationships with the external customers. Information which concerns customer relations is transmitted within the organization to all the departments that might have a use for the information.

- **R29** - The relationship to external providers of marketing services

External providers reinforce the marketing function by supplying a series of services such, such as advertisement, market research, sales and distribution.

Total RM is interaction in the networks of the selling organization, and its nano-market and mega relationships. It is directed to long-term win-win relationships with individual customers, and value is co-created between the parties involved. RM represents a paradigm shift in the way marketing is performed. The integration of goods and services into service and value propositions, the growing importance of customer in co-creation and CRM as part of a company's business system point in the direction of a more systematic and complete view on marketing. (Gummesson, 2002, s. 40)

7.5 Customer retention

Building a customer relationship is a long and a time consuming process. The relationship with the customer changes over the years. It is accepted as a general rule that acquiring a new customer is multiple times more expensive than keeping an old one. For this reason alone it should be mandatory to focus on keeping the current

relationships active rather than letting the customers emigrate to other suppliers and then replace them with newly immigrated customers.

Retention marketing and zero defection emphasize the relationship with the existing customers. The latter term means a defect-free relationship, reducing the loss of customers to zero. This does not imply that customers should be kept at all costs. If a customer has no need for an offering or the customer will remain unprofitable, defection should be encouraged. The real message of zero defection strategy is that customers should not leave because of disinterest from the supplier, late delivery, sloppy service or wrong pricing.

8 INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL

Intellectual capital can be defined as “total value of a firm minus its book value” Most of this capital is generated from the people working throughout the company. New and more comprehensive ways of calculating the assets of a firm have pinpointed the long-term value of intellectual capital as at least an equally determining factor for a firm’s success as short-term financial capital. However, the long-term success of a firm is eventually dependent of its financial performance, meaning that the intellectual capital has to be managed so that it is turned into economic results. As Gummersson says, “the issue is to recognize the long term importance of intellectual capital for the generation of financial capital and to gradually convert intellectual capital into financial capital”.

Intellectual capital can be divided into two groups which are individual and structural capital. Individual capital consists of employees, network partners and customers with their individual knowledge, behavior and network of relationships. Structural capital is the tangible information part of the company culture that can be retrieved and used by a newly appointed employee. It is transferrable and can be retrieved at any time unlike individual capital which is destroyed once a person leaves the firm.

For service providers it is vital to keep the individual intellectual capital on both managerial and operational level, or to transfer as much of it as possible to structural capital. A part of the capital can be stored in databases, but a substantial portion is lost when an employee leaves the company.

Knowledge is also a crucial part of intellectual capital. It can be divided into two sections: migratory and embedded knowledge. Embedded knowledge is part of structural capital. It can be found, for example, from databases and can be used by anyone with access. Brands, images and strong relationships with customers and network partners also contain embedded knowledge. Migratory knowledge is only

known by individual employees. The said information migrates with them when they decide to leave the company.

In conclusion, employees on a managerial as well as on an operational level are critical to the success of service providers, as they are to any firm. Keeping committed, motivated and skillful employees in the company is vital for success. However, customers and network partners should be treasured as well. They bring business to the service provider (customers), make it possible to provide customers with competitive solutions (network partners) and they support the development of new ideas, service concepts, solutions and technologies by sharing their requirements, visions and knowledge. By demanding better service they essentially uphold the development of the services provided. (Grönroos, 2000, ss. 8-9)

9 INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

In international organizations cultural differences are faced daily. It is of vital importance for the employees to know how to interact with colleagues of varied cultural backgrounds but the most important factor is interaction with customers.

The geographical location of the customer company usually has an impact on the language that the personnel use, but also on the way that they operate.

The general level of IT expertise varies between countries and companies. For example, in a less wealthy and developed areas usage of computers has been limited or the employee only has a moderate amount of computer usage in his/her daily tasks and is not comfortable in using them. In these instances the personnel in need of IT service have to be taken through the steps in a slow and carefully instructed manner. On the other hand, the encountered employee might be working for a customer whom specializes in IT solutions. In this case it is possible that the service desk employee will find himself/herself in a situation where the client has a better understanding of technology.

Time differences have to be considered when providing support. Customers cannot usually be contacted outside of office hours. Therefore, the service desk has to keep track of the different time zones.

Due to technological differences between countries such as internet infrastructure, the service desk cannot always apply the same solution for the same problem. This generates the need to think outside of the box. It is recommendable that the personnel working at an international service desk take at least some interest in the customer companies' business culture. This way the number of incidents generated by cultural differences can be minimized.

Due to the higher number of different variables, handling of international service requests usually takes more time than domestic tickets. In domestic cases the service

desk employee usually has a good understanding of the geographical factors regarding the customer's service request such as internet and IT infrastructure. This understanding is based on better knowledge of the domestic environment and possible company arranged visits to the on site location. International locations force the service desk employee to rely on available documentary regarding the site. The documents might not contain all the details that solving a specific service request entails, in which case the service desk agent has to ask the customer for specific technical details in order to solve the problem. The possibility for misunderstanding due to different mother tongue is high. Accents and technical jargon cause the message that both parties are trying to convey, to become distorted.

9.1 Culture

Culture is acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and to generate social behavior. This knowledge forms values, creates attitudes, and influences behavior.

Characteristics of culture:

1. *Learned*. Culture is not inherited or biologically based. It is acquired by learning and experience.
2. *Shared*. People as members of a group, organization, or society share culture; it is not specific to single individuals.
3. *Transgenerational*. Culture is cumulative, passed down between generations.
4. *Symbolic*. Culture is based on the human capacity to symbolize or to use one thing to represent another.
5. *Patterned*. Culture has structure and is integrated. A change in one part will bring changes in another.
6. *Adaptive*. Culture is based on the human capacity to change or adapt, as opposed to the more genetically driven adaptive process of animals. (Richard M. Hodgets, 1991, s. 35)

Culture has a heavy impact on international management, technology transfer, managerial attitudes and even business-government relations. From the service desk point of view the effect of culture on individual behavior is the most prominent due to its importance when encountering customers. In addition understanding what kind of influence culture has on management helps service desk employees when it comes to dealing with different companies.

- Centralized versus decentralized decision making. In many cases important organizational decisions are only made by top management. Some companies have decentralized their decision making allowing mid and lower level managers to actively participate in decision making. For example, this greatly affects end users level of credentials. In some companies a relatively low level manager can make service requests that can impact the whole company while in others permission from top level management is needed.
- Informal versus formal procedures. In some societies formal procedures are set forth and followed rigidly. In others more informal means can be used. This determines how the personnel from the customer organization can be contacted. Sometimes it is acceptable to directly call a department manager, but in some companies they can only be approached via email. Direct approach is frowned upon.
- High versus low organizational loyalty. In some societies people identify strongly with their organization or employer, in others they might identify with their occupational group.
- Cooperation versus competition. Whether society encourages cooperation or competition between co-workers can affect problem solving by the service desk. (Richard M. Hodgets, 1991, s. 36)

10 RESEARCH METHODS

This study was heavily influenced by my own experience in field. Experience which helped in understanding which theories should be pursued for the study and how the said theory could be applied in practice

The decision to disregard the usage of quantitative research method was done after conversing with the management of the IT service provider. After explaining that the goal of the empirical study of the thesis is to receive supplementary information to enhance the theoretical study and to gain insight, into the personal views of the service desk employees regarding service quality, it was decided that a quantitative method wouldn't give the best results.

To get the most accurate data possible a qualitative method was used in the empirical study of the thesis, which was conducted in the form of a semi-structured interview. Participating in this interview besides the interviewer, were two experienced service desk agents, called Jukka and Olli, from a prominent company that provides its customers with variety of IT service solutions. The focus of the interview was in the service desk department so we did not discuss what other IT services the company provides. The company wished to remain anonymous for the interview. Only the thesis supervisor has been provided with the name of the company. The main goal of the interview was to keep the discussion at a general level so that the information obtained could easily be applied to other companies.

The case company in question has a solid foundation and can be considered to be one of the most prominent figures in the IT solutions industry. The company has a very well established service desk where the service quality has been carefully monitored and honed over the years. For this reason their operational design for service desk serves as a model for others reaching for improved service quality.

11 RESULT AND CONCLUSIONS

The answers received during the interview largely reflected the already written theoretical data. The theory was enhanced in some points with the gathered data to give better value. The interview method was a semi-structured interview which means that the questions were written down and organized into theme based sections. Instead of an inflexible interview where the participants take turns in answering the questions with rehearsed answers, and the interviewer does not actively take part in the conversation. I conducted the interview in the form of an open discussion in which I had a proactive role. For this reason it could be said that the interview had three participants instead of just the two members of staff.

A question was asked from the participants who then took turns in answering it and supplementing each other's answers. I actively participated in the conversation asking for additional details with questions that were not rehearsed beforehand and sometimes challenging the views of the other participants forcing them to argue their points of opinion. This type of questioning gave information in a way that a completely structured interview and a quantitative method couldn't have. In addition to the rehearsed questions the conversation was guided to include various other details pertaining to service quality that hadn't necessarily been discussed in the theoretical section of the thesis.

11.1 Important factors regarding service quality:

The following points were brought up during the interview when the participants were asked "what are the most important factors regarding service quality that we haven't already discussed". According to the service desk employees these factors have a large impact on their work and service quality in general. Some of them were touched upon in the theoretical section of the study, but these findings come straight from the mouth of service desk professionals with years of expertise in the industry.

11.1.1 Cost of service and retention

Cost of service is a prominent factor in customer retention. Customers are looking for the most cost effective deal available on the market. However, the cost of switching a service provider is expensive. Creating a relationship with a new provider causes a lot of expected and unexpected costs. It takes time for the service provider to come up with SLA and the resources to uphold the customers IT infrastructure. Also, possible hardware changes are to be expected if the former provider was in charge of their delivery.

When the transition to new provider has happened the real problems start. If the reason for migration was cheaper cost of service, then quality problems might occur when the service provider has achieved the lower cost structure by decreasing resource costs. This automatically decreases the quality of service the service desk is able to provide. Over a longer period of time the new provider should be able to adapt to the customer's needs and the level of service increases. However, if they do not have the adequate resources, the service quality will always be lacking. Orienting the personnel to meet the needs of the customer takes time and the employees cannot adjust immediately to the situation. The customer has to suffer through a period of inconsistent service every time they change a provider regardless of the resources of the new provider.

If the customer feels that the service quality of the current provider is good enough, then it together with the cost of changing service provider prevents the customer from migrating.

11.1.2 Customer's Point of View

The ability to relate to the customer and see things from their perspective helps to provide empathy and to understand when to escalate tickets. This is an important social skill which can be used to make the best of each customer encounter. When the customer feels that the service desk employee understands the gravity of their problem and is able to relate to customer, a type of bond is formed leaving a good

impression on the customer. In addition certain issues might seem minor from service desk's perspective but when the issue is considered from the customer's point of view the issue might turn out to be vital for the end user's ability to perform work related tasks and therefore needs immediate escalation.

11.1.3 Single point of contact issues

Single point of contact is not necessarily only a good thing. When dealing with a complex technical problem the service desk acts as an intermediary between the customer and the technical experts of the service provider. Sometimes this leads to a situation where the expert gives advice or a possible solution to the problem that has to be conveyed to the customer by the service desk. When the solution does not work the service desk has to contact the expert again and ask for further instructions and repeat this pattern over and over again. This back and forth interaction might take from an hour up to several days depending on the availability of the expert. The problem could have been solved in a matter of minutes if the expert had contacted the customer and applied all the possible solutions immediately instead of just consulting the service desk.

Obviously the expert cannot contact the end user each time, because the expert might not be able to speak the same language as the customer. Experts do not receive training for customer encounters and for this reason cannot necessarily convey the message properly to the customer. Service desk employees always attempt to explain matters in a clear way to avoid confusing the customer with technical jargon. Experts who are not used to clarifying the issues to customers might fail to do so, and leave the customer confounded.

11.1.4 Continuous learning

Customers develop their systems and acquire new software and applications to better handle their business processes. All employees should be trained to handle issues relating to the customers acquisitions. This does not mean in depth knowledge of the software, but just enough knowledge for the service desk to be able to properly

provide tier 1 support and transfer the ticket forward if the know how is not sufficient. In general the need for self-development is a virtue, but in the service desk work it could be considered a mandatory mindset for the employees.

Technology is constantly changing and those who do not keep up with the times might find themselves unfit for the job. Service desk will often face service requests in which the knowledge acquired from orientation and additional trainings is not sufficient to full fil the task. In addition the operating models taught in the orientation will change over time so the employees have to be able to adapt to the changes and adopt the new models in favor of the old.

11.1.5 Cost efficiency

Cost efficiency is a commonly heard expression from the top management, meaning that the amount of time spent working on a service request should be monitored and no time wasted on unnecessary activities. The customers should not be sent exorbitant invoices formed out of time that the service desk agent effectively wasted on a request by performing unnecessary tasks. The customers do not take too kindly to having their money wasted. On the other hand, if the service request falls under non-billable category then the service provider's money is being wasted which affects the profit margins and is harmful for the business.

Providing competitive service is a difficult task when the tickets should be closed as fast as possible. Efficiency has to be created by solving the service requests the first time around. Reopening old tickets is far more inefficient then spending a little more time on a ticket.

11.1.6 Working as a team towards a common goal

Sharing of information between colleagues allows for faster completion of work tasks, but also improves the atmosphere at the work place. Meeting the requirements of the SLA falls to the entire service desk. While individual performances are monitored, it is the overall performance of the service desk which really matters. Asking and providing help among colleagues is mandatory for success. Both the

individual and collective performances increase along with cost efficiency. When individual employees do not have to spend time on searching for solutions to problems that a colleague has already solved, the tickets can be closed faster. Quite often the service desk gets many requests of the same type of a problem, in which case the issue is either department or companywide. Collaboration as a team allows the requests to be compiled together and be solved in a bulk instead of each employee working as an individual to solve the problem.

11.2 Conclusion

Based on the interview results it can be said that the thesis contains an adequate amount of information regarding the improvement of service quality at a service desk. Improving of service quality and customer relationship management are both continuous processes that all the IT service providers should continuously pay close attention to. There is always room for improvement. If a service provider is content with their service quality, improvement stagnates.

One of the main thoughts that the readers should comprehend from this study is that service quality is formed out of numerous different factors. Most of the business processes affect the quality directly or indirectly. With such a large number of variables it is hard to maximize the service quality in this type of industry. For this reason the companies should primarily focus on the areas which have more impact on quality. After this they can refine the minor details.

As a single point of contact the service desk personnel themselves have the largest impact on the service quality. When proper tools and infrastructure have been implemented, it is up to them to uphold the service quality through customer encounters. Investing in the training of service desk personnel pays dividends in this area. Especially social skills should be paid vast attention to, due to the fact that these skills allow for better results in customer encounters and they enhance the ability to work together with the other employees in the company.

According to the findings it is obvious that all of the service providers have their own areas which they need to develop. Like with ITIL the companies should take heed of the information presented in the study, but concentrate on the areas which they feel suits their business. For example, an IT service provider operating purely in the domestic market hardly needs to focus on the international aspects of the service quality.

11.3 Final remarks

The goal of the thesis was to look into how service quality is formed and how to improve the service quality of a service desk in companies.

The idea for the study started to form in May 2014 when I started working at an IT service desk. I gathered data pertaining to the thesis from the company and familiarized myself with the workings of the service desk thoroughly. Acquiring theory from books and integrating their knowledge together with my own experience at the service desk was the real challenge with this thesis.

After the interview I noticed that writing a large and separate empirical section for the thesis would be a difficult task, because unavoidably there would be a lot of repetition from the theoretical section. To prevent this, a large amount of the data from the interview was integrated with the theoretical study of the thesis and the new information kept in chapter 11 and its subchapters.

This study was meant to be made for a specific client in the beginning, but the bureaucracy concerning the release of information pertaining to the subject matter proved to be too much to handle. Getting a confirmation on what information can and cannot be used in the thesis was a slow process and the study seemed to get stuck in the initial stage. Abandoning the original plan and carrying out the study in its current form seemed to be the best choice for the completion of the study by the deadline.

Further research could be done on the topic in numerous ways depending on the objective and what angle is being used in the study. As a sequel for this particular

thesis, the study could be conducted with the quantitative approach to find out more about the current level of service quality, that different service desk providing companies have. This way a better focus could be given to the service quality deficits that the providers have and the research problem for further research could be tailor made to full fill these shortcomings. Additionally, a questionnaire could be distributed to the companies which have outsourced their service desk function to obtain data on what areas need the most improvement according to customers.

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APPENDICES

Semi-structured interview

Service desk

- What does service quality mean to you?
- In your opinion what actions can be taken on personal level to improve the quality of service?
- What are the biggest obstacles you have faced in your work?
- What is the scope of technical issues that the customers are in contact for?

International

- How does the international service desk differ from domestic?
- What are the challenges when providing support for international customers?

Internal

- How crucial is the need for cooperation between departments?
- How is the orientation to new tasks handled?

Customer relationship management

- How many customers have been assigned to you?
- What needs to be considered when providing support for a specific customer?
- What is the role of previously accumulated data in solving service requests?
- How are you able to keep track of different service level agreements?